

At-A-Glance: Recent Research Findings

Effective Police Management Affects Citizen Perceptions

*NIJ Research in Progress Seminar,
"Police Management, Citizen
Complaints, and Attitudes Toward
the Police," Robert C. Davis and*

*Pedro Mateu-Gelabert, available on
videotape from NCJRS, NCJ 181106.*

Throughout the 1990's, serious crime in New York City fell dramatically, particularly after the adoption in 1994 of policing strategies that demanded strict enforcement of quality-of-life statutes and targeted

guns, drugs, and youth violence. But implementation of these strategies was accompanied by an increase in civilian complaints against the police, which reached a high in 1995–96; by 1998, complaints had dropped, but they still were nearly 40 percent above the 1993 level. (See figure 1.) New York's experience has caused some to question whether citizen dissatisfaction with policing practices is the price for significantly reducing criminal activity.

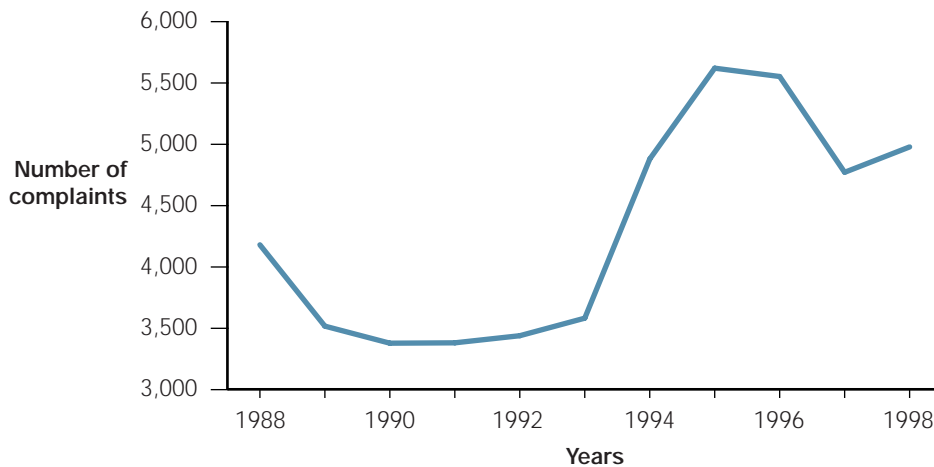
However, while civilian complaints rose citywide, complaints in the 42nd and 44th precincts (South Bronx) declined by 54 percent and 64 percent, respectively, between 1993 and 1998. (See figure 2.) According to researchers Robert C. Davis and Pedro Mateu-Gelabert of the Vera Institute of Justice, effective police management was the central reason for the decline in the 42nd and 44th precincts.

In a Research in Progress Seminar held at NIJ, researchers Davis and Mateu-Gelabert presented findings from two separate but related studies about citizen perceptions of policing. Davis and Mateu-Gelabert used interviews and statistical data to examine several potential explanations for the reduction in citizen complaints in the 42nd and 44th precincts and to uncover the reasons why citizens of those precincts were filing fewer complaints while citizens in the rest of the city were filing a greater number.

Training, Monitoring, and Consequences Make a Difference

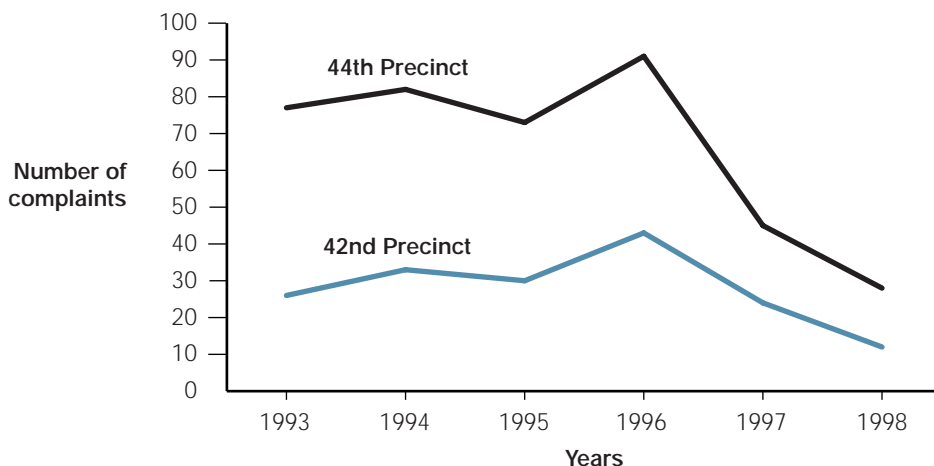
The research revealed that the management styles of the commanding officers and their interest

Figure 1: Citywide Civilian Complaints, 1988–98



Source: Civilian Complaint Review Board.

Figure 2: Trends in Civilian Complaints in the 42nd and 44th Precincts, 1993–98



Source: Civilian Complaint Review Board.

in promoting respectful policing were the key determinants.

Both commanders took a departmentwide policy known as Courtesy, Professionalism, and Respect (CPR)—introduced in 1997—and used it to further their vision of how police ought to interact with the public. They ensured that departmental training was reinforced by ongoing CPR training within their precincts, and they zealously monitored recidivist officers (i.e., those charged with more than one citizen complaint within a specified period). The commanders attached real consequences to the receipt of complaints, such as reassignment to desk duty or passing over officers for promotion. In addition, they managed community relations in a way that demonstrated police responsiveness to community concerns. Both commanders regularly attended precinct community council meetings, addressed community issues, and followed up on them at subsequent meetings.

Perceptions of Established Residents Differ From Those of Newcomers

In a separate but related study funded by NIJ, the researchers surveyed residents in Queens' Jackson Heights neighborhood to examine citizen attitudes toward political empowerment, voluntary and involuntary contacts with the police, police effectiveness, and police misconduct. The researchers categorized the ethnic groups in the neighborhood in two ways: those who were long-time, well-established residents (Italian- and African-Americans) and those who were newcomers (Colombians, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, and Indians).

The researchers found wide disparities in the two groups.

Better established, more politically powerful communities were more likely than communities of newcomers to perceive the police as effective and to voluntarily contact the police—for example, to report crimes and talk to police officers on the street.

The differences in perceptions were similar regarding police misconduct. Colombians and Dominicans had the highest perceptions of misconduct; African-Americans had the lowest. Also, younger persons were more likely than older persons to perceive misconduct, and persons victimized in any way in the past year or stopped by the police were more likely to perceive misconduct than nonvictims or those not stopped, respectively.

Ethnicity had no effect on citizens' willingness to report crimes. However, community empowerment measures had large effects:

Those feeling a greater sense of empowerment were much more likely to report crimes. Meanwhile, victims and persons stopped by the police were less willing to report crimes.

The researchers noted that the community plays a vital role in shaping attitudes, influencing resident perceptions of police through prejudices imported from their countries of origin and messages communicated through the local culture. Overall, the most important predictor of opinions about the police is the extent to which people's ethnic communities have become integrated into the social and political fabric of the city.

For additional information about the studies, contact Robert Davis, Vera Institute of Justice, 233 Broadway, New York, NY 10279.

How to Get At-A-Glance Materials

Materials are available at:

- NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>, or
- NCJRS, puborder@ncjrs.org, 1-800-851-3420, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

The summaries in this section are based on the following:

Research in Progress Seminars. At these seminars, scholars discuss their ongoing research and preliminary findings with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals. Sixty-minute VHS videotapes of the Research in Progress seminars are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420. Videotaped seminars are \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries).

NIJ Final Reports. These final submissions from NIJ grantees typically are available from NCJRS through interlibrary loan. In some cases, photocopies may be obtained for a fee. For information about these reports and possible fees, contact NCJRS.

NIJ Publications. Some of the information here is summarized from recent NIJ publications, which are available from the NIJ Web site or by contacting NCJRS. Refer to the documents' accession (ACN) or NCJ numbers.

Victim Services Programs for Women Evaluated

Final Report submitted to NIJ, Impact Evaluation of Victim Services Programs: STOP Grants Funded by the Violence Against Women Act, Barbara E. Smith, Robert C. Davis, and Laura B. Nickles, grant number 96-WT-NX-0003. Available from NCJRS.

Victims of sexual assault and domestic violence frequently suffer intense emotional distress and experience the need for a variety of victim services. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, and the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) Violence Against Women grants program funded by VAWA are important Federal initiatives to help these victims.

Preliminary research sponsored by the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section is showing that STOP funding appears to positively change the ways in which the criminal justice system and community programs respond to violence against women victims.

VAWA mandates that STOP subgrantees spend at least 25 percent of their STOP funds on each of three areas: (1) law enforcement, (2) prosecution, and (3) victim services. The remaining 25 percent is left largely to the discretion of grantees.

Sixty-two representatives of STOP subgrantees—including criminal justice agencies that deliver services to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims—were surveyed in research conducted by Barbara E. Smith, Robert C. Davis, and Laura B. Nickles. Ninety-six interviews also were completed with representatives from programs that cooperated closely with the 62 STOP programs.

Findings

Most of the 62 STOP-funded subgrantee programs surveyed were prosecution or law enforcement victim programs. Most were fairly new, and more than one-third began with the receipt of STOP funds. The average amount of awards to STOP subgrantees was \$47,626.

Service delivery. The majority of surveyed programs reported that they were able to serve more victims, expand the types of services offered, and provide more comprehensive services as a result of STOP funding.

Victims' well-being. A majority of STOP subgrantee respondents and the vast majority of the coordinating programs' respondents reported that they believed STOP grants empowered victims and improved victims' psychosocial well-being. Improvement in victims' financial circumstances also was noted, but by fewer respondents.

Victims and the criminal justice system. Most respondents surveyed reported that grants had a direct impact on:

- Keeping victims better informed about criminal justice actions taken in their cases.
- Improving victims' treatment by the criminal justice system.
- Yielding more successful prosecutions.
- Reducing the number of victims withdrawing their support from prosecution.

Victims and the community. Most STOP subgrantees and the vast majority of coordinating program respondents reported that STOP funds affected the way domestic violence and sexual assault victims were treated by the community. STOP funds extended the range of

services provided by community programs, increased the coordination of victim services, and increased awareness of violence against women issues.

In the opinion of those surveyed, STOP subgrantee grant awards yielded many positive results for victims, substantially improving their lives and their treatment by the criminal justice system.

Given the relatively small amount of the grants awarded and the newness of subgrantees to victim services, researchers were impressed by the wide variety of services these programs provided to sexual assault and domestic violence victims at many stages of the process. They also were impressed by the program changes and impacts survey respondents reported.

Performance Measures Shape Officer Actions

NIJ Research Report, Facilitating Organizational Change: Shaping Action Through Individual and Organizational Evaluations, Geoffrey P. Alpert, D.J. Kenney, and T.N. Oettemier, NCJ 175243, grant number 95-IJ-CX-0101. Photocopy charges will apply.

Law enforcement agencies are looking for new ways to measure officer performance because the traditional measures do not reflect changing requirements of community and problem-oriented policing. Community policing's goals and the type of work officers do is different from traditional policing. Length of experience, for example, doesn't necessarily translate into better community policing.

To understand the dynamics of applying new performance measures, NIJ awarded a grant to Geoffrey Alpert to study the issues

associated with changing officer behavior through performance evaluations.

Alpert's team of researchers selected one region of the Columbia (South Carolina) Police Department to become the "experimental" group (the group that would apply newly developed performance measures). Two other regions were selected to use the traditional performance measures and serve as "control" groups.

At the beginning and end of the 18-month project, researchers conducted agency-wide surveys and individual interviews with officers, supervisors, and administrators.

Better Measures Lead to Better Attitudes

The data show that the experimental group reported more positive attitudes than the control group on many of the questions relating to organizational issues and problem solving.

Generally, sergeants reported that the use of the new forms for performance evaluations influenced many officers to increase their involvement with the community. They noted that their officers did things in the community that they had not done before. For example, officers began working with youth to keep parks clean and safe and with residents in low-income housing areas to obtain paint and other supplies to make the neighborhoods more attractive and safer.

Interviews with officers told two stories. First, officers were interested in community policing and problem solving. Second, some officers reported insufficient training and ignorance about what was expected of them. Some voiced a concern that they were receiving conflicting messages from supervisors.

Interviews with key executives showed that the Columbia Police Department had been making a transition from traditional to community and problem-oriented policing during the past few years. As a result, the department was experiencing the type of growing pains typical of agencies that are attempting major shifts in their mode of operations.

Lessons Learned

For community policing and problem-solving techniques to be effective, both officers and supervisors need to be thoroughly informed about their duties, responsibilities, and expectations. The linkages among the members of the community, officers, supervisors, and administrators must be clear and strong. Expectations, techniques, efforts, and results must be consistent among all groups. Enhanced mentoring on community policing, problem-solving strategies, and appropriate performance measures would help officers and supervisors enthusiastically endorse and incorporate these components into their daily work routine.

Specifically:

- All stakeholders must be included in the process at the beginning of the intervention.
- Timely and consistent training should precede the interventions.
- The performance evaluations must be "user friendly" while at the same time capable of measuring the complexity of police work.

For more information, contact Geoffrey Alpert, College of Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina, 803-777-6424, geoffa@gwm.sc.edu.

Profiling the Needs of Young Female Offenders

Final Report submitted to NIJ, Profiling the Needs of Young Female Offenders: Instrument Development and Pilot Study, April 2000, Barbara Owen and B. Bloom, NCJ 182737, grant number 95-IJ-CX-0098. Available from NCJRS.

Although young female offenders remain a small minority within the juvenile justice system, their unique needs and program demands require particular attention. Previous research suggests that delinquent females are similar to delinquent males in terms of lower socioeconomic status, disrupted family backgrounds, and school difficulties, but their specific problems present unique challenges for the juvenile justice system and related service agencies. These gender-based differences shape both the types of crimes they commit and the community's response.

Previous research indicates that gender-based differences appear to stem from gender socialization and subsequent delinquent careers, gender differences in offense patterns and juvenile justice prosecutions, and the dominant role of abuse and family violence in the lives of at-risk young women. These problems are compounded by gender-based reactions, such as running away, prostitution, early pregnancy, petty theft, shoplifting, and some gang involvement.

The lack of gender-specific programming addressing the different needs of males and females and the lack of community-based alternatives result in an overreliance on institutional commitments. Despite decades of Federal efforts to encourage deinstitutionalization of status offenders,

many young females are inappropriately detained and incarcerated.

A recently released NIJ-supported study contributes to better understanding of the characteristics of girls and young women in the juvenile system so that policy and program planning can be better informed about these gender-specific needs.

The project developed and tested survey and interview instruments that can be used to collect descriptive data from girls and young women involved in the juvenile justice system. The authors also developed and tested materials to collect data through staff interviews and program reviews.

These instruments are intended to guide managers, researchers, and line staff in collecting and analyzing systematic information on youthful female offender populations.

The authors propose three basic steps for improving understanding of incarcerated young women:

- Develop a profile of the youthful female offender population.
- Conduct an onsite inventory of existing facility-based programs.
- Conduct a needs assessment that matches profile data with program data to determine gaps between the needs of girls and young women and current program availability.

Policymakers and practitioners can use the data in a number of ways. For example, they might develop a demographic description of the female population in their juvenile hall or State institution or collect information on program needs within a system, single institution, or special housing unit.

For a quick needs assessment, any one section of the instruments could be administered, such as the one on substance abuse. The instruments are not designed to be

used as individual assessment tools, but rather as an approach to collecting descriptive data on the overall population and program needs. The data also could be helpful to program evaluators by providing baseline information for determining process and outcome indicators.

Does Drug Testing Matter?

Drug Testing for Youthful Offenders on Parole: An Experimental Study, by Rudy Haapanen, can be found at the Web site of The Western Criminologist: The Official Newsletter of the Western Society of Criminology (Spring 1996 issue) at <http://www.sonoma.edu/cja/wsc/WSCNEWS3.html>. Grant number 91-IJ-CX-K023. An abstract is available from NCJRS under NCJ 182782.

Testing parolees for drug use as a regular condition of parole is a widely accepted practice. Drug testing is believed to help deter drug use by parolees and to help detect substance abuse problems requiring additional intervention. However, little is known about the effects of such testing on adult or youthful offenders released from confinement.

To address this issue, Rudy Haapanen and Lee Britton, researchers with the California Youth Authority (CYA), implemented a 5-year experimental study of drug testing for youthful offenders released on parole from the CYA. The study was designed to assess differences in parole adjustment and recidivism for comparable groups that differed only in the amount of drug testing received, from zero to up to two tests per month. New parolees were randomly assigned to one of five different drug testing levels, and the groups were tested at the assigned levels for the duration of parole (up to 24 months).

The 1,958 parolees in the study were mostly 18 or 19 years old at the time of parole, predominantly African American (41 percent) or Hispanic (38 percent), and overwhelmingly male (97 percent). More than half of these youths were committed for violent offenses; only 12 percent were committed for drug offenses. The sample averaged nearly 12 arrest charges each prior to CYA commitment.

The results of the study suggest that the benefits of drug testing for youthful offenders can be achieved with minimal surprise drug testing during the parole period (less than once per month). By keeping drug testing at a minimum, an agency could avoid a good deal of the cost of drug testing and could conserve time and resources, savings that could be diverted to providing additional services to parolees. Reducing the amount of drug testing would also mean, however, that agencies would have to find other, less direct ways to monitor the drug use behavior of their parolees and to document parole activities and parolee compliance. Parole adjustment and criminal behavior (as measured by arrests) did not improve with frequent drug testing (more than once per month). Indeed, groups tested at higher levels tended to have slightly worse outcomes.

Somewhat surprisingly, these youthful parolees appeared to have relatively low levels of drug use during the study period: only about 9 percent of all drug tests were positive. The researchers also found, however, that positive drug tests during the first few months of parole appeared to be good indicators of increased risk for criminal behavior later on. Drug testing during the early parole period may, therefore, serve as a relatively straightforward risk assessment procedure.